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## Reporting the discharge medication in the discharge letter: an explorative survey of family doctors

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### Background and Aim

In Germany, the discharge medication is usually reported to the general practitioner (GP) by an initial short report (SR) /notification (handed over to the patient) and later by a more detailed discharge letter (DL) of the hospital.

### Material and Method

We asked N=536 GPs (from Frankfurt/Main and Luebeck) after the typical report format of their patients discharge medication by the local hospitals. The questionnaire asked for 26 items covering (1) the designation of the medication (brand name, generic name) in SR and DL, (2) further specifications e.g. possibilities of generic substitution or supervision of sensible medications, (3) reasons why GPs do not follow the hospitals recommendations and (4) possibilities for an improvement in the medication-related communication between GP and hospitals.

### Results

39% GPs responded sufficiently to the questionnaire. The majority of the GPs (82%) quoted that in the SR only brand names are given (often or ever) and neither the generic name or any further information on generic substitution is available (seldom or never). 65% of the responders quoted that even in the DL only brand names are given. Only 41% of the responders quoted that further treatment relevant specifications are given (often or ever). 95% responded that new medications or change of custom medication is seldom or never explained in the DL and GP were not explicitly informed about relevant

medication changes. 58% of the responders quoted economic reasons for re-adjustment of the discharge medication e.g. by generic substitution. The majority of responders (83%) are favouring (useful or very useful) a pre-discharge information (e.g. via fax) about the medication and 54% a hot-line to some relevant person in the hospital when treatment problems emerge. 67% of the responders quoted in favour of regular meetings between GPs and hospital doctors regarding actual pharmacotherapy.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our survey pointed to marked deficiencies in reporting the discharge medication to GPs.

Conflict of interest: None